

Dhammacariyā and Samacariyā (part2)

(Transcribed from Prof. Oliver's Lecture)

4. Musāvāda and Musāvādā Veramaṇī

The opposite term of *musā* is *sacca* in Pāli. It is interesting to note that the opposite of *sacca* is not *asacca* but *musā* which means 'confusion.' In Sanskrit, *sacca* and *asacca* are the opposite terms but in Pāli, there is no word called *asacca*. Prof. Kalupahana says that the direct opposite of *sacca* is not *musā* but *kali* which means 'sin' or 'sinfulness.' He has quoted only one example from the Ānguttara Nikāya which other scholars do not take into consideration. Thus, there are three terms in Pāli related to this issue: *sacca*, *musā* and *kali*.

There are **two definitions** of the *musāvāda veramaṇī*. **One** is found in the *Sāleyyaka Sutta* (MN); it defines 'refraining from falsehood' after defining what falsehood is. According to this sutta, falsehood is uttered at one of those five places:

- (1) *sabhā*: meeting;
- (2) *parisa*: gathering, assembles;
- (3) *pūga*: unions of skill laborers like carpenter *pūga*; there were 18 *pūgas* during the time of the Buddha;
- (4) *ñātikula*: among the relatives;
- (5) *rājakula*: court.

All these are the places where the people meet. A falsehood is something uttered in one of these places. In fact, according to *Sāleyyaka Sutta*, **falsehood** is giving **false evidence**. That is what the Christian Bible also says; one of the Ten Commandments is that one should not give false evidence. So a person is brought to one of those places and requested to give evidence (*sakkhipuṭṭho obhinīto*); to tell what he has seen and what he has heard. If a person tells what he has not seen and has not heard, it is called *musāvāda*. Thus, *musāvāda* is that people give 'false evidence' at the certain stages.

Refraining from giving false evidence is truth (*sacca*), that is *musāvādā veramaṇī*. What is truth is that the person, when he is brought to these places, tells what he has seen and what he has heard. According to the *Sāleyyaka Sutta*, the individuals give false evidence, in other words, **utter falsehood** due to three reasons:

- (1) *attahetu*: for self benefit;
- (2) *parahetu*: for the benefit of others;
- (3) *āmisakiñcikkahetu*: for material gains.

For these three reasons, the person, who is brought to one of those places, gives false evidence. It is called *musāvāda* and refraining from this falsehood is called *sacca* (truth).

There is **another definition** in the *Dhammika Sutta* of the *Suttanipāta*. This sutta mentions only two places: when person is in *sabhā* or *parisa*, one should not utter lie to another. There should be a person

who listens to us when we utter lies; otherwise it is not a lie. Our statements become **falsehood only when others hear** them. In other words, the falsehood cannot be uttered alone.

In this definition of the *Dhammika Sutta*, there are three aspects to be looked into regarding the falsehood:

- (1) *na musā bhāneyya*: one should not utter falsehood;
- (2) *na bhānaye*: one should not cause others to tell falsehood;
- (3) *bhānatām nānujaññā*: when others utter falsehood, we should not give our consent; we should not keep silent when others say falsehood; we should oppose them.

When all these three aspects come together, then only it becomes truthful.

It is said in this sutta that to avoid falsehood all falsehood should be avoided (*sabbam abhūtam parivajjayeyya*). The term *abhūta* is falsehood (*musā*); refraining from *abhūta*, that is, *sacca* (truth) is *bhūta*. Therefore, according to the sutta, all *abhūta* should be avoided to be truthful. The terms *abhūta* and *bhūta* are the past participle of *bhavati* which derives from the root 'bhu,' meaning 'to take place' or 'to happen.' So the *bhūta* means what has already taken place and *abhūta* is what has not taken place; something which is not existent. In other words, *bhūta* is what we **have experienced** because it happened already in the past while *abhūta* is something which has not happened, that is, an **imaginary thing**. Thus, according to the *Dhammika Sutta*'s interpretation, falsehood derives from imagination; truth derives from our own experience. In the sutta, the term *bhūta* indicates the 'fact.' So the truth is **factual statement**; it is based on fact. But *abhūta* is 'non-fact.' So what is based on **non-fact** or imagination is falsehood. The term *bhūta* combining with *yathā*, which indicates the supreme truth in Buddhism, is called *yathābhūta*; things as they are, that is, *nibbāna*. That is how the four noble truths become truth; it is *yathābhūta*.

Buddhism condemns falsehood and praises truth. It is the religion of truth. Its most fundamental teaching is the four noble truths. In this context, refraining from falsehood is very much **emphasized** in Buddhism. In the *Dhammapada* it is said that the person who tells **falsehood** can **do any wrong**; that so much emphasis is not given to other precepts. Truth is so much emphasized and appreciated in Buddhism.

Another definition of truth is found in all the discourses of the *Silakkhandha Vagga* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. As a negative aspect it is said that one should refrain from falsehood (*musāvādā pativirato hoti*). And, as a positive aspect, truth is defined as *saccavādī saccasandho theto paccayiko avisamvādako lokassa*: we should speak truth (*saccavādī*); we should go hand in hand with truth (*saccasandho*); we should always talk about what is confirmed (*theto*); our statements should be based on fact (*paccayiko*); we should not create conflict in the world; what we talk should create peace and harmony in the world (*avisamvādako lokassa*).

This definition is very interesting and important in comparison with **three theories of truth** in the **Western philosophy**:

- (1) **correspondence theory**: what we state should be based on facts; it should correspond to the fact; if it is not factual as saying that the earth is flat, it is not true;
- (2) **coherence theory**: what we state should not have contradiction anywhere; un-contradict statement becomes true always; in the beginning, in the middle and in the end, there should not be any contradiction;
- (3) **pragmatic theory**: accordingly truth is always beneficial; it gives good results; a statement becomes true only when it produces good results.

All these three theories are incorporated in the Buddha's statement. When we take the term *theto paccayiko*, it reminds us of the first **correspondence theory**. The word *saccasandha* indicates the **coherence theory** because the entire statement should go hand in hand with the truth; there should not be any contradiction. The last **pragmatic theory** is related to the word *avisaṃvādako lokassa*; the Buddha says that truth gives peace and harmony.

In the *Subhāsita Sutta* of the *Suttanipāta*, the Buddha says that there are two kinds of statements: good statement (*subhāsita*) and bad statement (*dubbhāsita*). Statements become *subhāsita* only when it is **factual** (*dhammameva*), **pleasant** (*piyavācameva*), and **true** (*saccameva*). These three aspects in Pāli thus: (1) *dhammameva bhāseyya no addhammaṃ*; (2) *piyavācameva bhāseyya no appiyam*; (3) *saccameva bhāseyya no alikam*.

In the *Cūlaśaccaka Sutta* (MN), the Buddha says that **truth is only one**; there is no second truth (*ekam hi saccam na dutiyam atthi*). There are **no many truths** (*n'eva saccāni bahūni santi*). This is also valid for the four noble truths; four truths are the four dimension of one truth. All four truths cover the different aspects of the same problem, *dukkha*.

In the *Abhayarājakumāra Sutta* (MN), there is an analysis of truth. Accordingly truth is called *taccham* and falsehood is called *ataccham*. The term *taccham* derives from Sanskrit *tath+ya* which means **reality**. So reality is another name for truth; **unreality** is another name for falsehood. Truth is *bhūtam taccham* (things we can experience) and falsehood is *abhūtam ataccham* (things goes against reality). Both reality and unreality can be explained by using the words *appiyā amanāpā piyā manāpā anatthasahitam atthasahitam*. There can be truth (*bhūta*) which is **not pleasant** (*appiyā amanāpā*) but **meaningful** (*atthasahitam*) in the sense of producing results. But the Buddha says that the best position for truth is that it is **pleasant** and **meaningful** (productive). Buddhism never accepts that falsehood can be productive; it is always **not meaningful** (*anatthasahitam*) even though it can be **pleasant** (*piyā manāpā*) for many people. According to Buddhism, you cannot say falsehood with good intention. If it is falsehood, it is always bad intention. While Hinduism allows people say falsehood on various occasions, Buddhism does not allow falsehood for any reason.

5. Surā-Meraya-Majja-Pamādaṭṭhāna Veramaṇī

The fifth precept is the Buddhist attitude towards the consumption of liquor. There is a **syntactical difference** in the fifth precept. It is different from the other four precepts. It should be *surāmeraya veramaṇī* according to the forms of the others; but it has another qualifying term called

majja-pamādaṭṭhāna between *surāmeraya* and *veramaṇī*. Thus, it has a constructeral difference from the other precepts. This difference makes the fifth precept more important. In the Pāli commentaries, it is said that the consumption of liquor is the worst thing that the lay people should avoid. It is **the gravest sin**. I personally think that the qualifying term *majja-pamādaṭṭhāna* was added by the Buddha to indicate the gravity of the fifth precept. This term indicates that *surāmeraya* stands for *majjapamāda*. The consumption of liquor produces nothing but *majjapamāda*. In order to prohibit other possible interpretation of the consumption of liquor, the Buddha might put this term showing that it is the only thing you can get from drinking.

In Hinduism *surāmeraya* is strongly condemned. It was much more vigorous than Buddhism. In the *Sāleyyaka Sutta* (MN) the consumption of liquor is not taken into consideration because it is addressed to the Brahmin youths. Brahmins hate *surāmeraya*. They did not like *surāmeraya* at all. The Brahmin society is the society without *surāmeraya*. The **consumption of liquor** is one of the **four gravest sins** recommended in Hinduism. If a Brahmin is caught with the consumption of liquor, he should either be killed or be outcaste. The Brahmin would face the capital punishment rather than being outcaste because they hate Shudra. For the Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya, the consumption of liquor is banned; only Shudra is allowed to drink because it is considered as menial thing. If the person drinks water with the jar which was used for liquor, his tongue should be cut. In Buddhism there are no such punishments recommended for the consumption of liquor. According to Hindu texts, there are rites and rituals to be performed by those who are found guilty of consumption of liquor. So when some Brahmin youths from *Sāleyyaka* asked of what *dhammacariyā* and *samacariyā* is, the Buddha did not mention about the consumption of liquor because it is not a topic that can be talk about in front of Brahmins. But socially it is very important matter so that the Buddha has recommended it as one of the five precepts.

Now, there are four important terms in the fifth precept: *surā*, *meraya*, *majja*, and *pamāda*. *Surā* is **unfermented liquor** while *meraya* is fermented liquor. There are five kinds of *surā*: (1) *piṭṭha-surā*: liquor made of powder; (2) *odana-surā*: made of grains; (3) *pūva-surā*: made of sugar; (4) *kinṇapakkhitta-surā*: naturally fermented liquor; it is unfermented but naturally get into fermented; (5) *sambhāvasamyutta-surā*: made of putting in various things together.

There is another term for *meraya*, that is, *āsava* which means intoxicating and defiling things. It also has five kinds of **fermented liquor**: (1) *pupphāsava*: liquor made of flowers; (2) *phalāsava*: made of fruits; (3) *madhvāsava*: made of various kinds of tree flower; liquor made of flowers of Bassia Latifolia tree; (4) *gulāsava*: made of various of kinds of sweet; (5) *sambhāvasamyuttāsava*: made of combining various things.

These are the definition of *surāmeraya* according to the Pāli commentaries which the commentarial tradition goes closer to the Buddha's time. It is very interesting to note that all kinds of liquor and drink which we can find in the present day society are taken into consideration in that list. Therefore, *surāmeraya* is very **wide** and **large term**, not limited to one or two kinds of liquor. It covers **everything** which is **intoxicating**.

The term *majja* means physically inactive and *pamāda* means mentally inactive. Thus, the consumption of liquor (*surāmeraya*) makes man both **physically** and **mentally** weak and **inactive**. Here the emphasis is on the word *pamāda* which is defined as absence of mindfulness (*pamādoti satiyā vippavāsa*). Its meaning should be understood in relation to the opposite term *appamāda* which means *satiyā avippavāsa*; the presence of mindfulness. What happens in the consumption of liquor is that the mindfulness goes away. The word *pamāda* indicates the entire anti-Buddhist behavior. *Appamāda* is the term which summarizes the essence of Buddhism. The Buddha advises his followers to cultivate *appamāda* because it takes man to *nibbāna* while *pamāda* takes to the mouth of the death (*māra*). Therefore, when someone consumes the liquor, it takes him to mouth of *māra* day by day. In the social dimension, the consumption of liquor makes man lose his mindfulness (*pamāda*) so that he also loses his wealth and becomes poor.

In the one of the discourses the Buddha says that *yamkiñci akusalam dhammam sabbatam pamādamūla* (all these unwholesome activities are based on *pamāda*). *Pamāda*, the absence of mindfulness, is the base of all the unethical behaviors; on the other hand, *appamāda* is the base of all the wholesome activities (*yamkiñci kusalam dhammam sabbatam appamādamūla*). Therefore, it is mentioned in the commentaries that the person who consumes liquor can do any bad things. According to **the commentaries**, the **consumption of liquor** makes man **mad** but the other sinful deeds do not make man mad. That is why this fifth one (*surāmeraya*) is called **the gravest offence**. When man is mad, he can do any kinds of unwholesome acts. Commentaries say these at canonical reference that the Buddha himself says that the consumption of liquor makes man mad.

It is found in the *Dhammika Sutta* of the *Suttanipāta* which has given two codes of ethics, one for the monks and the other for the lay people. The code of ethics given for the lay is the five precepts. The Buddha explain the first four precepts by defining them with four stanzas; **each stanza for each precept**. But he has dealt **the fifth** precept with **two stanzas**. Thus, there is **more emphasis** on the fifth precept in the *Dhammika Sutta* itself.

The first stanza says that there are three aspects of the consumption of liquor: (1) *majjam ca pānam na samācareyya*: one should not consume liquor; (2) *na pāyaye*: one should not cause others to consume liquor; (3) *pibatam nānujaññā*: the consumption of liquor in the society should be criticized and opposed. As far as **monks** and nuns are considered, the consumption of liquor is not allowed; it is **completely banned**. When the permission of the consumption of liquor was asked at the second Buddhist Council,¹ it was refused by reciting the vinaya rule (*pācittiya 51*) which forbids the drinking of intoxicants.

As far as **the lay people** are concerned, the Buddha says that there maybe lay people who sometimes would prefer to taste the alcoholic liquor. Then the Buddha says that if this comes to your

¹ It was one of the ten points raised by the Vajjian monks whether *Jalogim-pātum* (the unfermented liquor) can be consumed by monks or not.

mind, you should think **this will end with madness** (*ummādan'antam iti nam viditvā*); thinking so, don't taste it. The commentators had seen this Buddha's word so that they said that the consumption of liquor makes man mad.

In the second stanza, the Buddha says that all the other unwholesome deeds are done individually and secretly but the **consumption** of liquor is **done collectively**. The person who drinks liquor always finds another person to join him. It is very rarely done individually. The drunkard gets others to drink. Unlike any other unwholesome acts, the consumption of liquor has very strong social connotation. Therefore, while the other four acts are fallen into the category of *apuñña* (unwholesome acts), the consumption of liquor is called *apuññāyatana* (an **institute of** *apuñña*). It is a combination of various unwholesome activities. It is not a single act. It has three characteristics: (1) *ummādana*: it has madding effect; (2) *mohanam*: hypnotizing effect; (3) *bālakantam*: it is liked by the foolish.

It is said in *Mahāvagga* that liquor **cannot be consumed** even **as a medicine**. There are three characteristics of liquor which differentiates it from other drinks: color, taste, and smell. So the Buddha says that as long as color, taste and smell remain in the liquor, it should not be used as a medicine. When these three are taken out from the liquor, it can be used as a medicine. There is **no** concept of **moderate drinking** in Buddhism. Drinking will bring you to much more drinking and ultimately make you become mad.

Finally, according to the *Sigālovāda Sutta (DN)*, the consumption of liquor is one of the six ways of wasting what you have earned. It is called *apāyamukha* (mouth of purgatory). I think that these **six disadvantages** of the consumption of liquor are the Buddha's final reference on this issue.

- (1) The **wealth** is wasted in front of your own eyes.
- (2) It generates various **diseases**.
- (3) The **social conflicts** emerge according to the consumption of liquor.
- (4) It is bad for the **reputation** of the person.
- (5) It makes man undisciplined, unethical, and **uncivilized**. When the man is drunk, he utters unwholesome words and shows the hidden part of his body.
- (6) The consumption of liquor **weakens the wisdom** because it kills the brain cells. The drunken man becomes a fool little by little.